13 COMMON MISTAKES THAT LEAD TO JOURNAL REJECTIONS

Introduction

Getting a research paper published is a huge deal for PhD students and researchers. But it's also common to get rejected by journals. Actually, around half of all submissions get turned down right away, without even being reviewed. A lot of researchers spend months working on a paper, only to have it rejected. The good news is that you can keep many of these rejections from happening. If you know the common mistakes and how to avoid them, you can really increase your chances of getting accepted. In this guide, we'll go over the 13 most Common Reasons for Journal Rejection happen. We'll also give you some practical advice and expert tips to help you out. To find out how we can support you through the whole publishing process, check out Our Services.

1. Choosing the Wrong Journal

Submitting your paper to a journal that doesn't match your research focus is a leading cause of Journal Rejection.

- Fact: Papers submitted "out of scope" are often rejected without review.
- Solution:
    1. Review the journal's aims and scope.
    2. Analyze recent publications to ensure your research fits.
    3. Use tools like Elsevier Journal Finder or Springer Journal Suggester. Example: A paper on "educational psychology" submitted to a clinical medicine journal is almost certain to be rejected.

PhDWise Tip: Our experts help you select the right journal for your manuscript, increasing your chances of acceptance.

2. Poor Abstract and Title

Your title and abstract are what editors and reviewers see first. If your abstract isn't good, even great research can look bad. Did you know? A good abstract can increase your chances of acceptance by 30–40% (Taylor & Francis).

Here's how to make it better:

Title: Make it specific, informative, and use keywords.

Abstract: Include the problem, how you solved it, the main results, and why it matters.

For example:

- Weak: Study on Climate Change Effects
- Strong: Impact of Rising Temperatures on Crop Yield Patterns in South Asia: A Meta-Analysis

Tip: We can help you improve your abstract and title with our editing services. And we help form the Journal Rejection

3. Lack of Novelty or Contribution

Journals seek research that adds new knowledge. Studies that replicate existing work or fail to show significance are often Journal Rejection.

- Fact: Papers lacking novelty are routinely rejected (Elsevier).
- Solution:
    - Clearly state your research gap in the introduction.
    - Highlight the unique contribution of your study.
    - Emphasize implications in the conclusion.

PhDWise Tip: Our experts help articulate the novelty and significance of your research.

4.Methodology Flaws

Even the best ideas can fail if your way of doing things is weak or not clear. Did you know? Having a not-so-great way of doing research is a top reason why studies get rejected .

What to do:

- Explain things like your sample size, tools, steps, and how you examined the data.
- Make sure your data analysis is strong and can be checked by others.
- Include ways to double-check that your results are correct and reliable.

PhDWise Tip: Our methodology review makes sure your research is solid, easy to understand, and ready to be published in a journal and it will help you that your Journal Rejection not get happen.

5.Poor Writing and Grammar

Clear writing is essential. Even strong research can be rejected due to poor language or formatting.

- Fact: Editors often desk-reject unclear or grammatically weak papers (Elsevier).
- Solution:
    - Use short, clear sentences.
    - Follow journal formatting guidelines.
    - Consider professional editing services.

PhDWise Tip: We offer professional editing and proofreading.

6.Ignoring Journal Guidelines

Every journal has its own rules for submissions. If you don't follow them, your paper will probably get rejected right away. FYI: Not following the rules is a big reason why papers get turned down without even being reviewed and there chance of Journal Rejection

Here's what you should do:

- Read the journal's instructions for authors carefully.
- Use citation management software to make sure your references are correct.
- Make sure you include all the required sections and ethical statements.

PhDWise Tip: PhDWise can help make sure your paper follows all the journal's rules. And we will provide the best guidelines so that your Journal Rejection will not happen.

7.Inadequate Literature Review

A thorough literature review demonstrates your expertise and research context. So the inadequate literature review can lead to the Journal Rejection

- Fact: Poorly contextualized studies are frequently rejected .
- Solution:
    1. Use recent, high-quality references (last 5–10 years).
    2. Highlight research gaps and controversies.
    3. Explain how your research addresses these gaps.

PhDWise Tip: We assist with literature review structuring and referencing.

8. Submitting Without Proper Peer Review or Expert Feedback

Many researchers rush to submit their manuscript without receiving external feedback, leading to obvious errors that could have been fixed. This thing leads to the Journal Rejection for them.

- Fact: Pre-submission peer review can reduce rejection chances by up to 50% (according to multiple publishing best practices shared by Elsevier).
- Why it matters: A fresh set of expert eyes can catch issues in logic, flow, methodology, grammar, and formatting.

Solution

- Share your manuscript with colleagues, supervisors, or professional reviewers.
- Request feedback on clarity, methodology, novelty, and presentation.
- Revise before submission. PhDWise Tip:

PhDWise Tip : provides a Pre-Submission Review Service to help identify issues before your paper reaches the journal desk

9. Weak Data Presentation and Visualization

Even if your research is great, bad data presentation can confuse or annoy reviewers. And it will obviously lead to the Journal Rejection.

Good news! Journals like clear, high-quality images that show what you found (this is true for Springer, Elsevier, and Wiley).

What to avoid:

- Messy tables
- Blurry images
- Missing labels or confusing legends

What to do:

- Use high-resolution images.
- Pick simple charts (like bar charts, scatter plots, or heatmaps).
- Make sure everything is labeled and mentioned in your paper.

PhDWise Tip: You can get help redesigning your graphs and tables from PhDWise Data Visualization Support.

10. Ethical Issues and Missing Ethical Approval

Ethical concerns are a major reason manuscripts are rejected instantly especially in medical, social sciences, and human-subject research.

- Fact: Studies involving human participants require ethical clearance according to guidelines followed globally (including ICMJE, COPE).
- Common mistakes:
    - Missing ethical approval number
    - No informed consent statement
    - Lack of data transparency

Solution

Add the following sections in your manuscript:

- Ethical Approval Statement
- Consent to Participate
- Data Availability Statement

PhDWise Tip:

PhDWise can help you structure all ethical compliance statements correctly so that it should be perfect and it will not Journal Rejection happen.

11. Not Following the Correct Reference Style

References are one of the most common reasons papers are sent back for revision — or rejected.

- Fact: Incorrect referencing is among the top issues flagged during desk review (as stated by major publishers like Elsevier and Taylor & Francis).
- Common problems:
    - Wrong citation style (APA, MLA, Harvard, Vancouver, etc.)
    - Missing DOIs
    - Inconsistent formatting

Solution

Use reliable tools:

- Mendeley
- Zotero
- EndNote

Ensure:

- All in-text citations match your reference list
- All references follow the journal's required style

PhDWise Tip:

We provide accurate reference formatting for all citation styles

12. Not Addressing Reviewer Comments Properly

A lot of papers get turned down after resubmission because writers don't really listen to what the reviewers said and this negligence leads to the Journal Rejection.

Common Mistakes

- Skipping over the big issues
- Giving weak explanations
- Not pointing out what's changed
- Getting emotional or defensive

Solution

- Keep your response polite and professional.
- Deal with every comment, even if you don't agree.
- Back up your explanations with proof.

PhDWise Tip:

Need a hand answering reviewer comments?

PhDWise Revision &Reviewer Response Support

13. Submitting Before the Manuscript Is Truly Ready

A rushed submission often leads to rejection due to:

- Unpolished writing
- Unorganized structure
- Missing details
- Poor formatting

Solution

Perform a final checklist:

- Formatting
- Grammar
- Figures
- References
- Novelty
- Ethical statements
- Journal scope match

PhDWise Tip:

Get a final professional review before submission:

READ THIS FULL BLOG : common-reasons-for-journal-rejection